

Examining Work-Family Conflict and Occupational Stress Among Employed and Unemployed Individuals

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between work-family conflict and occupational stress among employed and unemployed individuals. The primary objectives were to examine work-family conflict and occupational stress among working and non-working individuals. The sample consisted of 100 participants from Mumbai, aged 20 to 30 years, divided into two groups: 50 employed individuals and 50 non-employed individuals. A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select participants. To measure work-family conflict, the Work-Family Conflict Scale (WFCS) by Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000) was employed, and occupational stress was assessed using the Occupational Stress Inventory Revised Edition (OSI-R) by Samuel H. Osipow (1998), specifically the Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ). Data analysis was conducted using t-tests. Results indicated that non-working individuals experienced significantly higher levels of work-family conflict ($t = 9.13$, $p < 0.01$) and occupational stress ($t = 13.52$, $p < 0.01$) compared to their working counterparts. These findings highlight the impact of employment status on stress and conflict in the work-family domain. The study contributes to the understanding of the differential stress experiences of employed and unemployed individuals, emphasizing the need for interventions to address occupational stress and work-family conflict for both groups.

Keywords: *Work-family conflict, occupational stress, work-life balance, occupational roles, stress management*

The modern workforce is increasingly shaped by the complex interactions between work and family responsibilities, creating potential stress for both employed and unemployed individuals. These interactions are critical to understanding broader occupational stress issues and work-family conflict (WFC). While both groups may experience various forms of stress, the nature, sources, and outcomes of their stress can differ significantly based on employment status, societal norms, and personal circumstances. This introduction explores the relationship between work-family conflict (WFC), occupational stress, and the employment status of individuals, providing a comprehensive overview of the theoretical frameworks and empirical findings in the field.

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Received: January 26, 2024; Revision Received: March 18, 2024; Accepted: March 31, 2024

Work-Family Conflict: A Growing Concern in Contemporary Society

Work-family conflict refers to the tension that arises when the demands of work and family roles are incompatible, leading to strain in one or both domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The issue of work-family conflict has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly as more individuals participate in the workforce while balancing family obligations (Allen, 2001). WFC can manifest in two primary forms: time-based conflict, where time spent in one role detracts from the other, and strain-based conflict, where stress from one role carries over to affect performance in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Research has shown that this conflict can lead to a host of negative outcomes, including reduced job satisfaction, burnout, and adverse health effects (Frone, 2003). In understanding how these conflicts manifest, it is essential to consider how employment status—whether employed or unemployed—affects the dynamics of WFC.

The Impact of Employment on Work-Family Conflict

Employed individuals often face significant work-family conflict due to time pressures, long working hours, and the mental demands of balancing family and work commitments (Frone, 2000). The modern work environment, characterized by increased demands for productivity and the erosion of work-life boundaries, has exacerbated the challenges of managing family responsibilities. These pressures have been shown to negatively impact family life, leading to strained relationships and decreased quality of family time (Voydanoff, 2005). For instance, individuals in high-stress occupations, such as healthcare, finance, and law, may struggle with work-family balance due to long hours and the emotional toll of their jobs (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Furthermore, work-related stress, such as job insecurity, role ambiguity, and interpersonal conflicts at the workplace, can contribute to the intensity of work-family conflict (Eby et al., 2005).

On the other hand, employed individuals may also benefit from positive aspects of their work, such as providing financial security and social networks that can buffer against stress. These advantages can reduce the impact of WFC on their overall well-being (Allen et al., 2000). However, these benefits may not be uniformly experienced across different groups. For example, individuals in low-wage or precarious employment often face heightened stress due to financial instability and job insecurity, which can exacerbate WFC and lead to more significant health consequences (Bailyn, 2006).

Unemployment and Work-Family Conflict

While much of the literature on WFC focuses on employed individuals, the experience of work-family conflict among unemployed individuals is equally important. Unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, can induce its own form of stress, impacting not only the individual but also the family unit. For unemployed individuals, the absence of a structured workday may lead to role confusion, disrupted routines, and heightened feelings of worthlessness (Paul & Moser, 2009). The lack of income can lead to financial strain, which in turn affects family relationships, leading to increased conflict within the household (Maume, 2004). This financial strain is often compounded by the emotional toll of job searching and the uncertainty surrounding future employment prospects.

Interestingly, unemployment can sometimes reduce work-family conflict by alleviating the time pressures associated with work. For some individuals, being unemployed allows for increased family involvement and a redistribution of domestic tasks (Nordenmark, 2004). However, these potential benefits are often overshadowed by the negative psychological

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impacts of unemployment, including decreased self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, and increased anxiety about future financial stability (Paul & Moser, 2009). Thus, while unemployed individuals may experience less time-based conflict, they may experience more strain-based conflict, where the stress of unemployment affects their ability to contribute meaningfully to the family or to cope with family-related stressors (Breen, 2005).

Occupational Stress and its Relationship to Work-Family Conflict

Occupational stress, which refers to the psychological and physical strain resulting from work-related demands, plays a critical role in shaping work-family conflict. Occupational stress can stem from various sources, including job demands, role ambiguity, lack of control, and poor social support (Karasek, 1979). These stressors can spill over into the family domain, increasing the likelihood of interpersonal conflict at home, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job performance (Cohen & Wills, 1985). For instance, high levels of occupational stress can lead to a depletion of resources such as emotional energy, making it difficult for individuals to engage positively in their family roles (Hobfoll, 1989). In contrast, a supportive work environment, characterized by clear role expectations, autonomy, and positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors, can help buffer against the negative effects of occupational stress on family life (Schaufeli et al., 2009).

Moreover, the relationship between work stress and family life is often mediated by personal characteristics such as personality traits, coping strategies, and social support networks (Beehr & McGrath, 1992). For example, individuals who possess high emotional intelligence or use adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-solving or seeking social support, may be better able to manage work-related stress and its impact on family life (Staw, 2001). However, individuals who struggle with maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance or denial, may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of work-family conflict (Allen et al., 2000).

Understanding work-family conflict and occupational stress requires a multifaceted approach that considers both individual and contextual factors, including employment status, gender, socioeconomic background, and personal coping resources. The interplay between work and family life is complex and dynamic, and the experience of work-family conflict can vary significantly based on whether an individual is employed or unemployed. Furthermore, while employment provides financial security and social connections that can buffer against stress, it also brings challenges in the form of time pressures and work-related demands. Unemployment, while alleviating time-based conflicts, introduces new stressors related to financial insecurity, identity, and emotional well-being. By examining the factors that contribute to work-family conflict and occupational stress, researchers and policymakers can develop strategies to better support individuals in navigating the complex demands of work and family life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the work-family conflict among Working Persons & Non-Working People.
2. To find out occupational stress among Working Person & Non-Working Person.

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Hypotheses of the study

1. There will be no significant difference found between working and non-working Persons on the dimension of work-family conflict.
2. There will be no significant difference found between working and non-working Persons on the dimension of occupational stress.

Sample

This research study involved a total of 100 participants selected from Mumbai. The sample consisted of two distinct groups: 50 individuals who are currently employed (referred to as working individuals) and 50 individuals who are not employed (referred to as non-working individuals). The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 30 years, with an average age of 24.63 years and a standard deviation of 3.47 years, indicating a relatively consistent age distribution within the sample.

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select participants for this study. This approach allowed for the intentional selection of individuals who met certain criteria relevant to the research objectives, ensuring that the sample effectively represented the population under investigation.

Variable

Independent Variable:

- 1) **Types of Person** 1) Working Person 2) Non-Working Person

Dependent variable:

- 1) Work-family conflict 2) Occupational Stress

Tools

1. **Work-Family Conflict Scale (WFCS):** Work-family conflict scale established by (Carlson, Kacmar and Williams, 2000) which is an 18-item multidimensional measure and divided into six subsections. Responses are collected on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).
2. **Occupational Stress by Samuel H Osipow (1998):** The Occupational Stress Inventory Revised Edition (OSI-R) was developed by Osipow in 1998. In the present study Occupational Roles Questionnaire (ORQ) is used for measuring Occupational Stress. ORQ is divided into six sub scales- Role Overload, Role Insufficiency, Role Ambiguity, Role Boundary, Responsibility, and Physical Environment. The ORQ consists of sixty items and each sub scale is comprised of ten 92 items.

Statistics

t-test was used for the statistical analysis of data.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table No. 01

't' showing the significance of difference between work-family conflict and Occupational Stress with respect to Working Person & Non-Working Person.

	Working Person (N = 50)		Non-Working Person (N = 50)		t- ratio
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Work-Family Conflict	65.74	4.70	56.01	5.88	9.13**
Occupational Stress	440.29	6.12	421.95	7.38	13.52**

**0.01 = 2.62, *0.05 = 1.98

For work-family conflict, the mean score for employed individuals is 65.74 (SD = 4.70), while for non-employed individuals, the mean score is 56.01 (SD = 5.88). The difference between these two means is statistically significant, with a t-value of 9.13, degrees of freedom (df) = 98, and a p-value of less than 0.01.

A second measure of work-family conflict shows that the mean score for working individuals is 440.59 (SD = 6.12), compared to 421.95 (SD = 7.38) for non-working individuals. This difference is also highly significant, with a t-value of 13.52, df = 98, and a p-value of less than 0.01.

CONCLUSION

1. Non-Working Person had significantly high work-family conflict than the Working Person.
2. Non-working Persons had significantly higher Occupational Stress than Working Persons.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Rathod, S.S. (2024). Examining Work-Family Conflict and Occupational Stress Among Employed and Unemployed Individuals. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(1), 2733-2738. DIP:18.01.254.20241201, DOI:10.25215/1201.254